

<b>YORK-POQUOSON SHERIFF'S OFFICE</b>	<b>GENERAL ORDERS</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b> Community Relations	<b>NUMBER:</b> 2-18
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> April 14, 2008	<b>VLEPSC STANDARDS:</b> ADM.20.01-.03
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## INDEX WORDS

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Crime prevention

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## I. POLICY

The premise of community relations is based on the principle that law enforcement is an integral element of the community. Community relations are manifested by positive interaction between the community and the Sheriff's Office and represent unity and common purpose.

While the primary responsibility for enforcement of the law lies with the people, the complexities of modern society and the inability of the people to cope with crime has required the creation of a law enforcement service. The Sheriff's Office represents only a portion of the total resources committed to the public to achieve this goal. A citizen's encounter with the Sheriff's Office can be both a frightening and an emotional experience. Under these circumstances, the risk of misunderstanding is great. The minimizing of this risk is a challenge to every member of the Sheriff's

Office. Accordingly, the York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office is committed to establishing close ties and responsiveness to the citizens of York County and the City of Poquoson.

The Sheriff's Office must strive to establish a climate in which a deputy may perform his/ her duties with acceptance, understanding, and approval of the public.

Recognition of individual dignity is vital in a free system of law. Just as all persons are subject to the law, all persons have a right to dignified treatment under the law; and the protection of this right is a duty, which is binding on every member of the Sheriff's Office.

Deputies must treat citizens with respect and be constantly mindful of those with whom they are dealing are individuals with human emotions and needs. Such conduct is not an additional duty imposed on a deputy's primary responsibilities: it is inherent to them.

The Sheriff's Office conducts numerous public information, crime prevention, and DARE programs to educate the public, to eliminate specific crime problems, and to foster positive community relations.

In addition, the Sheriff's Office cooperates in developing new programs in those areas where the relationship with any group, or public as a whole, may be improved. In dealing with citizens, each deputy must attempt to make his contact one that inspires respect and generates cooperation and public approval. While entitled to personal beliefs, a deputy cannot allow individual feelings or prejudices to enter into public contacts.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this order is to establish community relations policies for the York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office as a whole, and to provide for their maintenance and revision.

### **III. PROCEDURES**

#### **A. General**

1. Every Sheriff's Office employee has an individual responsibility for promoting community relations. Each member shall assist the Sheriff with identifying and addressing problems arising between the Sheriff's Office and all segments of the county population; establishing formal relationships with community groups; identifying issues and responding to them before they become problems; and to develop programs, which increase community understanding and confidence.
2. Crime Prevention and DARE deputies are assigned primary responsibility by the Sheriff for the community relations function and will be the primary contact points for developing and coordinating Sheriff's Office community relations programs.
3. Responsiveness to the community  
The Sheriff's Office's task is governed by law and policies, formulated to guide enforcement of the law; it must also include consideration of the public will. Responsiveness must be embraced at all levels within the Sheriff's Office by a willingness to listen and develop a genuine concern for the problems. The identification of community needs must become an integral part of the mission of the Sheriff's Office.
4. Interpersonal communication  
Each employee must be aware of the law enforcement needs of the community and of his assigned area of responsibility. Guided by policy, all personnel must tailor their performance to the attainment of the Sheriff's Office's community relations objectives, and to the resolution of crime problems within the area he/she serves. The Sheriff's Office shall provide programs to encourage productive dialogue with the public and to ensure that the unity of law enforcement and the people is preserved.

#### **B. Community relations activities**

1. All contacts, official and unofficial, between a Sheriff's Office employee and citizens, in any grouping in our community, constitute a vital part of the Sheriff's Office's community relations program. Ideally, all such contacts would contribute to the development of positive images toward the Sheriff's Office and its employees and activities.
2. A wide variety of planned community relations activities are undertaken by the Sheriff's Office as a means of increasing public support, dialogue, understanding, and the development of the Sheriff's overall community relations policies.
3. Activities include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Formal participation and liaison with civic, social, business or other public and community groups. Sheriff's Office personnel routinely interact with civic clubs, participate on committees with business owners, school and government officials, child abuse teams, and regional law enforcement groups, including the local criminal justice training academy.
  - b. Presentation of programs to community groups and organizations addressing crime prevention, or other selected Sheriff's Office programs, objectives, activities or successes.
  - c. Pre-planned media releases in support of Sheriff's Office programs. Soliciting and gathering citizen/community input when developing Sheriff's Office policies and procedures; utilizing this information in developing and improving agency policies and procedures to become more responsiveness to community needs.
  - d. Determining citizen satisfaction with law enforcement services can be based upon feedback received from group activities, review of inquiries and complaints made, and through the conduct of follow-up surveys and interviews, individually or with groups.
    - i. Surveys for citizens will be made available on-line.

- ii. Surveys may be conducted in person, by mail or telephone, and may be combined with other law enforcement related matters, such as the Sheriff's citizen academy.
  - iii. Survey of citizen attitudes and opinions should be conducted with respect to Sheriff's Office performance, overall employee competence, a deputy's attitude and behavior toward citizens, overall safety and security concerns within the county as a whole, and recommendations and suggestions for improvement.
4. Community input concerning Sheriff's Office policies, procedures, practices, programs and training, as well as recommendations and, will all be considered in the development of future agency policies.

C. Statistical Information

- 1. Statistical information may include but is not limited to the following:
  - a. UCR / IBR Statistical summary for each calendar year.
  - b. Yearly summation of calls for service, traffic summons issued, and civil papers served.

D. Problems, tension, grievances

- 1. The York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office is committed to correcting specific actions, practices, and attitudes that may contribute to community problems, tensions, or grievances. By recognizing such problems at an early stage, preventive action can be taken by the Sheriff that might well prevent greater problems in the future.
- 2. All employees who receive or hear about community concerns regarding law enforcement activities or services are encouraged to pass this information to first line supervisors, shift supervisors, and/or division commanders. Depending on the severity or urgency of the problem, supervisory or managerial personnel should forward this information to the Chief Deputy, who will, in turn, ensure that the Sheriff is informed.

3. Complaints against Sheriff's Office personnel/staff should follow the process outlined in RR 1-9 Complaints/Internal Affairs

E. Evaluation

Since the Sheriff's Office responsiveness to community needs and concerns must be flexible, evaluation of community relations programs must occur on a semi-annual basis. Evaluation by the Crime Prevention deputies and DARE deputies will consider citizen surveys, complaints, requests, and inquiries. Emphasis and/or activities will be modified, expanded, or reduced as needed based on this semi-annual evaluation.

1. The Crime Prevention and the DARE deputies will meet on a semi-annual basis to discuss the following community relation and communications issues:
  - a. Description of current concerns voiced by the community.
  - b. Description of potential problems that have a bearing on law enforcement activities within the county.
  - c. Recommended actions that address previously identified concerns and problems.
2. Following each meeting, an agency report will be generated and forwarded to the Sheriff via the Administrative Services Division Commander and Chief Deputy on the issues identified above.

F. Community relations goals

In seeking to maximize the quality and level of services provided to the community, the York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office has established the following goals:

1. To support new and existing programs that establishes close ties with the community and help to meet its needs.
2. To correct actions, practices, and attitudes that may contribute to community tensions and grievances.
3. To maximize professional law enforcement behavior by having the lowest possible number of instances of misconduct and incompetence such as discourtesy, verbal abuse, harassment, excessive use of force,

violations of rules and regulations, and negligent use of issued equipment.

4. To maximize public esteem, approval, and respect for the Sheriff's Office by maintaining the highest possible number of instances of citizen approval, satisfaction, and commendation.

G. Annual Report

The York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office is responsive to community needs and concerns. The agency will prepare an annual report that will be made available to the citizens on an annual basis.

1. The Crime Prevention and DARE deputies prepare an annual report on the agencies activities for the prior year.
2. The Crime Analyst will prepare statistical information as identified in section C.
3. The Crime Analyst, DARE deputies, and Crime Prevention deputies will generate an Annual Agency Report and forward it to the Sheriff via the Administrative Services Division Commander and Chief Deputy.
4. Once approved by the Sheriff or his designee, the Annual Report will be posted on the Sheriff's Office Internet Web site and be made available to the Public Information Office for the County of York to be included in the Citizens News mailer.